

INVENTIONS OF THE NEGRO.

(Continued from page 3.)

ented an electric lamp, in 1881; P. B. Downing, an electric switch for railways, in 1890; E. R. Robinson, an electric railway trolley, in 1893; P. B. Williams, formerly a student at the Catholic University in Washington and at present a teacher in the colored High School of that city, an electromagnetic railway track-switch, in 1900; and W. B. Purvis, an electric railway switch, in 1894.

The name of W. P. Purvis comes next on the list with 18 patents, relating mostly to improvements in paper-bag machinery, but covering also a few other inventions. J. F. Ferrell is credited with a dozen patents on valves for a variety of uses; and next comes ex-Congressman Geo. W. Murray, of South Carolina, with eight patents on agricultural implements. Mr. Henry Creamer has been granted seven patents for as many different inventions in steam-traps; and S. R. Scotttron has nearly as many on a variety of subjects. Charles V. Richey, of Washington, has patented a car-coupling, a railroad switch, a fire-escape, a washboard, and a combined hammock and stretcher. Among the other colored residents of Washington who have obtained patents for their inventions are Leonard C. Bailey, for a truss that was favorably passed upon by the Army Medical Board, for an army tent that was recommended by the Head of the U. S. Army; A. F. Hilyer, a clerk in the U. S. Treasury Department, for water-evaporating attachments for hot-air registers; and the late James Wormley for a life-saving apparatus. Record is also made of two patents to F. J. Loudin, the leader of the famous Fisk Jubilee Troupe that has circumnavigated the globe.

Among the really important inventions on the list mentioned should be made of those of J. E. Matzeliger, who is said to be the pioneer in the art of attaching soles to shoes by machinery; and throughout the shoe-making district of New England, where his machine is known as "The Nigger Machine," it is regarded as the basic invention in that art.

A GUN INVENTED BY A NEGRO.

Another invention that seems destined to make a place for itself in the scientific world is that of the rapid-fire gun by a Negro named Eugene Burkins. When the gun was first patented it was extensively noticed by the Scientific American and other technical journals; and was pronounced by them all as being a decided advance in the art of ordnance and gunnery. The gun is constructed with a magazine at the breech in which a large number of heavy shells can be held in reserve, and in the action of the gun these slip down to their places and are fired at the rate of fourteen a minute.

The gun is elevated upon a revolving turret with electrical connections enabling the gunner to direct the action of the machine with a touch of his finger.

The writer knows of only one instance in which a patent was granted to a colored woman, and that was to Miss Miriam E. Benjamin, of Boston, who obtained a patent on a gong signal and one on a pinking apparatus.

It has been suggested that much of the success attained by Negro inven-

tors may be traceable to the infusion of white blood. This proposition, generically stated, lacks both novelty and proof. It has been advanced with equal persistency and uncertainty in nearly every public discussion of the Negro's intellectual achievement. And it is a constantly-asserted claim that those Negroes who show the greatest reinforcement of Anglo-Saxon blood show also the greatest development of brain power.

If one may reduce so broad a question to the narrow limits of mere instances, it will still be difficult to say on which side of the matter the truth stands. Many of the men in the Negro race who have accomplished most in the field of pure literature are those in whom there is not visible a single touch of Anglo-Saxon blood. Men like Dr. Edward W. Blyden, ex-president of the College of Liberia, at Monrovia, and ex-minister from Liberia to the Court of St. James, whose comprehensive learning and ripe scholarship make him a valued contributor to the leading British Magazines; the late Dr. Joseph C. Price, president of Livingston College; and ex-Congressman Robert Browne Elliott, of South Carolina, both orators of great ability; the late Alex. Crummell, of Washington, whose rare pulpit eloquence frequently attracted to his church services the late General Arthur while he was President of the United States; Prof. Kelly Miller, of Howard University; and Paul Laurence Dunbar, the poet, are all of this type—pure black; and they have, as I think, no peers among the race in their respective lines of intellectual effort.

And it is, of course, equally difficult to reach true conclusions on this subject with reference to Negro inventors, for here again the question quickly assumes a shape that lends itself readily to never-ending comparisons. In the field of invention, as elsewhere, there has not seemed to exist a reasonable ground for assuming that any "dead line" of intellectuality runs across the stream of pure Negro blood for among the inventors who are personally known to the writer, those like Granville T. Woods, the Electrician, and Elijah McCoy, both of whom have led all the rest in the number, variety and utility of their inventions; ex-Congressman Murray, of South Carolina; the Montgomeries, of Mississippi; Charles V. Richey and P. B. Williams, of Washington, who belong to the distinctly unmixed type, have done fully as much as any others to win a standing for the Negro in the field of invention. As above stated, these facts make it difficult, if not impossible, to determine what proportion of the Negro's advancement is traceable to his reinforcement of Anglo-Saxon blood.

It is held to be of far greater importance, however, to show that the Negro as a race has actually accomplished very much of value in the line of invention, and thus to show how much in error are those who constantly assert that the Negro has made no lasting contribution to the civilization of the age.

These facts ought clearly to show that under favorable environment the Negro is capable of performing his whole duty in the work of mankind, whether it be tilling the earth with his hoe or advancing the world by his thought.—Henry E. Baker, in *New York Evening Post*.

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